

Frances Withers House
202 Cannon Street at Prince
Georgetown
Georgetown County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-316

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

FRANCES WITHERS HOUSE

Address: 202 Cannon Street at Prince, Georgetown, Georgetown County, South Carolina.

Present Owner and Occupant: J. L. Bull, Jr., 202 Cannon Street, Georgetown, South Carolina.

Present Use: Residential.

Brief Statement of Significance: An early nineteenth-century house with attractive architectural features.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and subsequent owners: Frances Withers of Friendfield Plantation; later the Coachman family, up to 1861; then the Tilley and Merriman families. Purchased in the twentieth century by Joseph Bull, Jr.
- B. Date of erection: About 1815. "Both before and after the War of 1812 our [South Carolina Low Country] seaborne commerce suffered acutely and prosperity returned slowly. Between 1810 and about 1816 there appeared to be a suspension of important building in the Low Country generally. I rather suspect that this house was built in the first wave of economic recovery after the War of 1812." (Albert Simons, a report for the Georgetown Historical Society)
- C. Notes on known alterations and additions: Extensively restored in the twentieth century by Joseph Bull, Jr.
- D. Sources of information: Bolick, Julian S. Georgetown Houselore. Clinton, S. C.: Jacobs Press, 1944.
Georgetown Chamber of Commerce. Historic Trail of Old Homes and Buildings of Georgetown, S. C. Georgetown, S. C.: Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, n. d.
Simons, Albert, F.A.I.A., a report for the Georgetown, S. C., Historical Society, probably prepared in 1962 or 1963.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1963

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: Small attractive, raised cottage, with pedimented portico on front.
- B. Technical Description of Exterior
 - 1. Number of stories: One-and-a-half stories on elevated basement.
 - 2. Number of bays: Five-bay front, three-bay side.
 - 3. Layout: Rectangular, with portico on front; small wing to left rear.
 - 4. Foundations: Brick.
 - 5. Wall construction: Plain clapboards, painted white, approximately 5" to weather.
 - 6. Structural system: Traditional frame construction.
 - 7. Portico: Three-bay portico elevated on large brick piers; wide, late nineteenth-century, frame staircase leading from ground, with turned balusters and fancy turned newels; similar railing on porch; turned, wooden Doric columns; pediment has a fanlight window with key-stone; board floor, and plaster ceiling.
 - 8. Chimneys: Two stuccoed brick chimneys on rear of house with two stuccoed brick arched miters over each chimney.
 - 9. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Side basement entry has a small stoop with pediment and louvered doors. The main entry from portico has four-paneled louvered door and a rectangular transom with fan arrangement of lights; an unusual pilaster trim at each side of the door divides into five recessed flat panels of varying height; a flat molded architrave is across top.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are nine-over-nine light, double-hung wooden sash. Two-paneled louvered shutters (lower panel has operating louvers).
 - 10. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with standing seam, metal covering.

- b. Gable: Gable of house has matched flush siding, and a 12-light-plus fan single-sash window with pilaster trim and keystone in arch.
- c. Dormers: Dormers on rear only, two single dormers at ends with single 16-light wooden sash, gable roofs, and pilaster trim. The rear, also, has a centered large three-window dormer with a gable roof; the triple center window has a 12-light wooden sash center and two-over-two-light double-hung wooden sash at sides; the end windows in this center dormer have 16-light single, wooden sash. All dormers have pilaster trim. Gable end of the house is pedimented with cornice return, and matched boarding.

C. Technical Description of Interior: The following is by Albert Simons, F.A.I.A., A report for the Georgetown, S. C., Historical Society, probably prepared in 1962 or 1963:

"The ceiling on the main floor is 11' 5 3/4", which permits the use of tall slender columns on the exterior portico with its cornice aligning with the eaves of the house. The windows, however, are not as tall as the ceiling height would easily permit and are still carried out in the pre-Revolutionary manner, with nine small panes of glass in each sash instead of taller sash with larger panes of glass as was coming into use elsewhere at this time.

"Where the walls join the ceilings in the principal rooms, the wood mouldings and cornices have been replaced with plaster cornices with ornamental motifs precast in plaster applied.

"The mouldings which make up the mantels are more varied and complex in contour than the simpler gamut of moulding of earlier times, cornices are not as deep but of greater projection, and in contour and combination generally resemble the designs on the "Builders Guides", etc. of Asher Benjamin which continued to be published and re-published in Boston, Philadelphia and New York all during the first half of the 19th Century.

"Doors no longer have raised and beveled panels but are kept perfectly flat and are defined by minute and precise mouldings. In exterior doors the panels are kept flush with the vertical styles and horizontal rails, and only defined vertically by a narrow beaded joint.

"At the back of the house leading from the bedroom into a modern bathroom is a door with the panels framed with Greek

echinus or 'thumb' moulds suggesting the later construction of this rear enclosure.

"The pickets in the stair railing are $3/4$ " showing on the edge and $1-1/8$ " in depth. Though nothing could be simpler the proportions give an impression of lightness and elegance.

"The floor boards are narrower than in the earlier houses, varying from $4-1/4$ ", $5-3/4$ " to $6-3/4$ " and are mostly comb-grain, i.e. rift sawn. This change in the width of flooring planks was due no doubt to the greater scarcity of very large trees, but also the fact that the narrower boards made a smoother floor and comb-grain was harder and less apt to splinter than the old face grain wide boards.

"These are some of the details which help to approximate the period; they do not of course convey any idea of grace and elegance of a distinguished house of a clearly differentiated architectural character."

D. Site

1. Setting: The house is located on a quiet, residential corner site and is situated well back from the street.
2. Walks: Cement walks to street, concrete walks to house and around side.
3. Landscaping: Attractively landscaped with trees, flowers, shrubs.

Prepared by James C. Massey, Architect
National Park Service
February 1963